

Adolescent Health Care

At regular 6th and 9th grade health exams and anytime during adolescence:

- Discuss the physical changes of puberty and the effect of chronic illness or disabilities on physical and sexual development.
- Talk about the importance of learning how to maintain good hygiene, emphasizing menstrual hygiene issues for girls with disabilities.
- Discuss obesity, dental problems, acne and other problems affecting youth with disabilities;
 - accelerated osteoporosis in nonweightbearing young adults- additional dangers with high soda pop intake.
 - need for activity and exercise to keep heart and muscles fit
- Discuss strategies to prevent alcohol, cigarettes, and drug use/abuse
- Discuss how to recognize, report, and/or prevent violence such as assault, rape, incest, suicide, homicide (Kids Count, 1999, shows that for KY the rate of accidents, homicides and suicides is 73 per 100,000 as compared with 62 per 100,000 for teens ages 15-19 in the US).
- Discuss or refer the topics of masturbation, sexual intercourse, contraception, STDs screening and treatment, pregnancy and childbearing:
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- Discuss the challenges of access to reproductive health for youth with disabilities, particularly young women.
- Identify secondary disabilities such as depression, behavioral problems, bowel, bladder and skin problems, poor nutrition and/or obesity, poor dental hygiene.
- Are immunizations up to date, especially tetanus?
- Screen for depression and refer for treatment.
- Provide examples of how families can promote care and independence such as having high expectations, treating their children with disabilities like their siblings to the greatest extent possible, teaching skills to manage their health condition on a developmentally appropriate level and reteaching as needed.
- Discuss how families can promote inclusion at home, school, and the community
- Emphasize the importance of early work experiences. Children without disabilities often have their first paying job by age 12. Children with disabilities often do not get paid for work until late adolescence. Consequently, youth with disabilities do not get the connection between work and money as quickly as their peers!
- Encourage to do well in school—is first job—learn attendance, planning, balancing multiple responsibilities, hygiene expectations and accommodations (bowel and bladder management), work effort, increasing responsibility, and joy of advancement.